

Colchester Royal Grammar School

6 Lexden Road, Colchester CO3 3ND

Inspected under the social care common inspection framework

Information about this boarding school

This school, situated in Colchester, is a maintained school with academy status. The school caters for boys aged 11 to 18 and for boys and girls in the sixth form. The school is academically selective. There are 1012 pupils on the school roll. Boarding provision, for up to 30 boarders, is exclusively for sixth formers. The boarding accommodation is provided in two houses, both of which are situated on the main school site. At the time of the inspection, there were 26 boarders.

The head of boarding has been in post for two years and has a relevant qualification as required by the national minimum standards.

The boarding provision was last inspected in January 2020.

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), at the request of the Secretary of State, we suspended all routine inspections of social care providers on 17 March 2020.

This inspection was brought forward to address specific concerns or allegations received by Ofsted.

Inspection dates: 11 to 13 May 2021

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people, taking into account **requires improvement to be good**

How well children and young people are helped and protected **requires improvement to be good**

The effectiveness of leaders and managers **requires improvement to be good**

The boarding school is not yet delivering good help and care for children and young people. However, there are no serious or widespread failures that result in their welfare not being safeguarded or promoted.

Date of last inspection: 28 January 2020

Overall judgement at last inspection: good

Inspection judgements

Overall experiences and progress of children and young people: requires improvement to be good

Boarders form a very small fraction of the overall pupil numbers at the school. The relationships that boarders have with boarding staff offer a level of safety and protection that is lacking in the wider school. However, shortfalls in safeguarding and leadership within boarding remain and need to be addressed before boarders are receiving good enough care and protection.

Boarders have good relationships with most of the staff. However, boarders and some staff were unclear about the formal processes available to make complaints regarding boarding. The school's complaints procedure does not consider boarding. This has the potential to limit the opportunities for boarders or their families to raise concerns.

Boarders have high aspirations and achieve good results. Boarders were consistently positive about their progress. They see boarding as providing additional value to their overall experience at the school, both academically and socially. All boarders spoken with said that they have enjoyed the boarding experience.

The staff are conscious of the need to enthusiastically encourage boarders to engage in activities other than study. The committed staff worked hard to provide boarders with a good range of activities during COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. This meant that the effect of the restrictions was significantly reduced for boarders.

New boarders are very positive about the way in which they were supported to integrate into boarding. They felt that, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, they were able to get to know housemates and had been well supported by staff. No boarder has contracted COVID-19 while boarding.

How well children and young people are helped and protected: requires improvement to be good

Boarders feel protected because of the support that they receive from boarding staff. Boarders said that they would speak to boarding staff if they had concerns. However, three of the six female boarders would either not raise concerns with teachers about a peer's harmful sexual behaviour or would not have confidence in teachers to respond to any concerns effectively. This does not provide sufficient assurance that pupils can or do pass on things which concern them to staff at the school.

On one occasion, the staff did not act to safeguard a child who had not turned up at the school as expected. Although the child was unharmed, the failure to act had the potential to leave the child at risk of harm.

Managers have again not ensured that all safeguarding records are good enough. In one instance, there was no record of a discussion between designated safeguarding

leads. As a result, no record exists of the decision or rationale for actions taken or not taken. This does not allow for scrutiny or review of decision-making or provide children and their families with clear records if they wish to access them in the future.

Staff are alert to the pressure that boarders may be feeling. The staff are aware of which boarders may need extra support or attention.

Boarders' behaviour is generally very good. No boarders have gone missing from boarding. There have been no instances of staff needing to use physical interventions. Boarders said that they get on well with their peers in boarding and that they have not experienced bullying or racism at the school.

Since the last inspection, managers have acted to ensure that all designated safeguarding leads have received designated safeguarding lead training.

The effectiveness of leaders and managers: requires improvement to be good

Leaders and managers have not ensured that all the issues identified at the last inspection have been addressed. They have not ensured that record-keeping is good enough. On one occasion, information relating to an investigation following a near miss was not recorded beyond a brief note on a member of staff's performance management review. This limits the opportunity to monitor or review decision-making and reduces the opportunity to learn from mistakes.

On one occasion, a staff member's visitor supported an activity without formally being designated a volunteer. The blurring of these roles means that although a Disclosure and Barring Service check had taken place, additional measures that would have been in place for a formal volunteer were not in place, therefore diluting intended safeguards.

The staff receive annual performance reviews. However, although regular team meetings take place, there is no formal one-to-one supervision or reflection in between these yearly meetings. This limits the opportunity for reflection and staff development.

Leaders and managers have high aspirations for the boarders. They want them to achieve their very best and the boarders recognise this. The boarding manager is highly regarded by staff and boarders.

Managers have a generally good knowledge of the boarders. However, there are gaps in leaders' and managers' understanding of the lived experience of boarders. Staff and managers were shocked to hear of female boarders' reluctance to raise issues with teaching staff.

Managers have good relationships with the boarders' families. Feedback from parents about boarding is predominantly positive.

What does the boarding school need to do to improve? Compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding schools

The school does not meet the following national minimum standard for boarding schools:

- The school ensures that: arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school; and such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. (NMS 11.1)

Recommendations

- Ensure that pupils can and do pass on things which concern them to staff at the school.
- Ensure that the complaints policies consider boarding and that boarders understand the range of routes available to them to raise any concerns.
- Ensure that staff receive regular, reflective, challenging and effective supervision focused on boarders' experiences, needs, plans and feedback.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people using the 'Social care common inspection framework'. This inspection was carried out under the Children Act 1989 to assess the effectiveness of the service, how it meets the core functions of the service as set out in legislation, and to consider how well it complies with the national minimum standards.

Boarding school details

Social care unique reference number: SC018009

Headteacher: Mr John Russell

Type of school: Boarding school

Telephone number: 01206 509100

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Inspectors

Ashley Hinson, Social Care Inspector (lead)

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